Vol. IV. Numb. 25.

THE OBSERVATOR.

Of the French *being in Poſſeſſion of our Fiſhery at* New-found-land. *Of the Nature of that Country and its Trade. The Benefit thereof to* England, *&c.*

From **Saturday** June the 23d, to **Wednesday** June the 27th, 1705.

Obſ. WELL, Honeſt *Country-man*, what News? Thou haſt brought me none a long time.

Country-m. There are better and ſafer Subjects to Diſcourſe of than News; your medling with Publick Affairs creates you Enemies; if there be a Miſcarriage it muſt reſt ſome where, and the People on whom it reſts will be angry if you expoſe a Miſmanagement, therefore I would have you let News alone, ſpeak of the *Scandalous Tackers*, there's no harm in that. Rather than run your ſelf into Danger, tell a Tale of a *Tub*, of *Tom Thumb* or *Reynard the Fox*, or let me tell ſome Country Stories which I learn't of my old Grannum in the Chimney-Corner.

Obſ. Aye, and you'll tell 'em in your own *Ruſtick Dialect*, and ſet the People a railing at us that we don't ſpeak fine, that your Diſcourſe is Filthy, and I don't know what.

Country-m. My Diſcourſe is better than theirs becauſe 'tis Natural; let 'em have the *French Language*, the *French Meaſles*, aye and the *French Government* too if they pleaſe to go to *France*, we are willing to be rid of more than are willing to go from us. Let 'em keep their *Beau Top-Knot Language*, I'll ſpeak plain *Engliſh*. I'll call a *Spade* a *Spade*, a *Rogue* a *Rogue*, and a *Whore*, a *Whore*. Theſe *Beau Writers* when they are Gravel'd then they rub their Foreheads, and cry out he writes like a Beaſt, gives *Filthy Language*, and uſes *Paw Words*.

Obſ. Prithee, *Roger*, tell me the News in any Language and I ſhall be ſatisfy'd.

Country-m. I have heard you, Maſter, talk often of a Place call'd *New foundland*, what a deal of Riches it affords to the *Engliſh Nation*; but ſo it ſeems, it has happen'd, I don't know how, that the *French* have lately poſſeſs'd themſelves of the greateſt part of it, and that St. *Johns* is the only place now there, which remains in our Hands, and under no Apprehenſion of being taken.

Obſ. Then the *French* have made good the *Engliſh* Proverb, *Give an Inch, take an Ell.* By that Inglorious Treaty of *Ryſwick* a part of that Country was given to the *French* and became their *Property*, when as before they Fiſh'd there by Permiſſion, or rather to uſe the Language of King *William* and Queen *Mary*'s Declaration of War, they had Clandeſtinely got part of that Country from us, as afterwards in that War they got the whole, by the Aſſiſtance of ſome *Canada Indians* joyning with the *French* at *Placentia*.

This gave ſuch a great Stroke on our Trade, and made ſuch Havock of our Merchantmen, that upon the reiterated Complaints of our Merchants, the late Government thought fit to ſend Colonel *Gibſon* with ſome Troops to reduce that Place which he ſoon Effected.

'Twas then thought convenient to Fortifie that Country as the *French* had done *Placentia*; our part of *New-found-land* being not Fortify'd before; the place pitch'd upon to be Fortify'd was St. *Johns*, whether becauſe it was neareſt the place in Poſſeſſion of the *French*, or by reaſon of the conveniency of the Harbour, I can't tell; but certainly the greateſt part of the Fiſhing Harbours lying at a diſtance from St. *Johns*, and many to the Northward of Cape *Bonaviſta*, if the Project of ſecuring ſuch a Country by Land Forces and Gariſons muſt take place, ſome Forts ought to have been Built to the Northward, and not all the Harbours neglected ſave one.

I take the ſecurity of *New-found-land* to be order'd thus, The Gariſon of St. *Johns* to defend it in the Winter, and a Squadron of Men of War ſufficient to ſecure the Harbours in Summer.

I would not pretend to be Wiſer than the reſt of Mankind; but I have often thought the Expence of Fortifications in *New-found-land* might be ſav'd. There are no Roads in that Country, it is full of nothing but *Impaſſible Woods* and *Swomps*, in Winter the *Snows* are Exceſſive deep, and continue till melted by the Sun. I never yet heard of ſuch a March as that of the *French* from *Placentia* to our Quarters, but they reſted at the firſt Place, if I have not forgot the Accounts, which I wiſh I had by me. But certain it is, an Army of Devils under the Command of *Belzebub* himſelf, cannot over-run all our Plantations in *New-found-land* in one Winter, no not in a whole Summer.

It may therefore be a Querry, Whether we might not have ſav'd the Charge of a Gariſon and Fortifications at St. *Johns*, by bringing away the Inhabitants, whoſe Numbers are inconſiderable in any of thoſe Harbours, and what they get in the Winter as inconſiderable, only a few Furs, and ſome Veniſon for their Subſiſtance.

You muſt underſtand, Honeſt *Country-man*, that *New-found-land* can hardly be call'd a Habitable Country, for they are Subſiſted moſtly with Proviſions Winter and Summer from *England*, till of late Years they have had ſome Supplies from *New-England*. 'Tis as difficult a thing to find a Blade of *Graſs* in that Country, as 'tis to find a *Vertuous Woman* in a *Bawdy-Houſe*; *Green Peaſe* and *Beans* are Sold at about 100 Thouſand Pounds a Buſhel, and *Cherries* not one Farthing under 1000 *l.* There's no *Corn*, no *Cattle*, no *Dairy*, and what is worſt of all, not a Cup of *October*.

Country-m. That Air won't agree with my *Conſtitution*, no *October*, Quotha! Then 'tis a Country fit only for *Frenchmen*, let 'em keep it in the Devils Name, for *Roger*.

Obſ. I am ſatisfi'd no better Air is found on the whole Surface of the *Terreſtial Globe*, no Country more Healthy, nor better Stor'd in Summer with Proviſions ſuitable to my Stomach,

or

or any Mans that can live without Fruits and Dainties.

You have Fowl in abundance, as *Goose*, *Duck*, &c. and *Patrages* in many places of the Country, *Venison*, and that the best, plenty enough; *Fish* in such abundance that no place in the World affords so great a Quantity; what better Dish, *Roger*, than *Cod*, a little Corn'd, with good *Butter* and *Eggs*?

Country m. Aye, Master, that's true; but how de'ye come by the *Eggs* in a Country where there are no *Cocks* and *Hens*?

Obj. We are contented with the *Eggs* of Wild Fowl, of which a couple of Fellows in an Hour or two's time will gather a Bushel. And, *Roger*, for your Beloved Dish, you may take as many *Lobsters* out of the Sea, in half an Hours time, with one of thy Rakes, as will Dine 20 Men, in that Country we take none but the best, and fling the rest again into the Sea.

Country-m. Master, if there were any Soil in that Country *I* would go and take a Farm there; there is Land, what sort of Land is it?

Obj. All *Rock* and *Swomp*. But the *Swomps* may be drain'd, and the *Rocks* may be improv'd.

Country-m. Master, you say there are *Deer*, how do they live? I must pump you about this *Country*, for I have a great fancy to be a *Farmer*, where no Body else can interfer with me.

Obj. I can't positively tell you what the *Deer* feed on, perhaps on the Moss or Brouze of Trees, of which there are several sorts, tho' the greatest part Spruce and Fur. But whatever they feed on they are extream fat; I have eaten part of a Haunch of Venison brought from *Greenland*, that cut three Inches and a half in fat, tho' there is not one Tree in the whole *Country*, and I have been told no *Herbage*, save wild *Scurvy-Grass*, on which the *Deer* and *Pidgeons* grow very fat; and there are vast quantities of those Creatures, besides *Bears*, white *Foxes*, &c. in that Country.

Country-m. Master, I wonder this Country was not improv'd; you have told me formerly, that it has been above One Hundred Years in the Possession of the *English*, and in that time 'tis strange no Husbandmen should have settled there.

Obj. There is such an extraordinary Profit got by the Fishery, that Husbandry is not in the least minded. People generally mind that Trade which is carry'd on with least Charge, and has a speedy and certain return of Profit; all which Conveniences are found in the *New-found-land* Trade.

The Charge of that Trade is the least Considerable of any. The first Charge is only a small quantity of *Salt*, a few *Chalonpes* or *Boats* to take the *Fish*, with a few *Hooks* and *Lines*. The *Stages* and Conveniences Ashore are of small Charge; all the Materials except *Salt* costs us nothing, and that often we have made to our hands when we fetch it from the Isles of *May* or *Saltatudos*, the Grand Concern we take out of the Sea, viz. the *Cod*, and costs us nothing; and the materials for Curing the Fish Ashore we have at the same place from the *Woods*. In short here is a vast Profit from Labour only, the Charge inconsiderable in respect of the return, and the whole Voyage over betwixt the beginning of *March* and the latter end of *September*.

Some People may think me vain, should I affirm that the Banks of *New-found-land*, under a good Management, would be a greater Advantage to the Queen of *England*, than the *Mines* of *Peru* and *Mexico* are to the *Spaniards*; and yet, were I now with my Books to show you the *Calculations* I have made of that Trade, it would plainly appear.

The Immense Charge of getting *Gold* and *Silver* from the Bowels of the Earth, is beyond Comparison with the small Charge of the *Fishery*. *Money* is but a *Servant*, *Merchandize* and *Staples* are the Masters, and will command *Money* in all parts of the World.

We can find our *New-found-land* poor *Jack* in *France*, in *Portugal*, in *Spain*, in the *Italian Principalities*, throughout the whole *Mediterranean*, even to the Arches, and every where commanding the Product of *Peru* and *Mexico*, so that we, with a small Charge, get the returns of others Immense Labour and Diligence.

Those are the best *Commodities* that People can't be without, which much enhances the Value of the *New-found-land* Trade, all the *Popish Countries* must eat Fish at certain Seasons, under the Penalty of *Starving* or *Damnation*. The *Fishery* of *England* has an Influence over the *Souls* and *Bodies* of those poor *Ignorant Devotes*, and every *Lent* in *Popish Countries*, is a vast Sum in the Pocket of *England*.

Country-m. This makes my Heart ake to think that the *French* should have this Profitable *Fishery*: Now all the *Popish Countries* must buy of the *French*, they have got their own *Fish* and ours too.

Obj. May be not. I remember the *French* Fish'd for us last Year; for the Queens Ships took about two thirds of their *Bankers*, as they were homeward bound, and who knows but we may serve 'em such another Trick. There's Life in a *Cod* as well as in a *Muscle*, I am not out of hopes of *New found land*, notwithstanding this Disaster, of which too, we are not fully satisfied.

Nay, for ought I know it may prove for the best, if the Government hereby be inspir'd with a just Revenge, and send a *Squadron* of *Ships* with some Forces to reduce and take all the *French* are Possess'd of in that *Country*? 'Tis not too late in the Year for such an Enterprize, and we can spare Forces enough to accomplish it.

The next time we meet we'll Discourse more on this head, and consider the probable Causes of this Mischance, and the Methods of preventing the like for the future.

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